

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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USIA-06 AID-05 DHA-05 EB-08 COME-00 FEAE-00 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 8490

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINS, VE

SUBJ: COPEI NOMINATES LUIS HERRERA CAMPINS AS ITS

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ON A PROGRAM OF

"PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY"

REF: CARACAS 8274

SUMMARY. COPEI SENATOR LUIS HERRERA CAMPINS WAS NOMINATED BY ACCLAMATION FRIDAY, AUG 23 AT CLOSE OF COPEI'S THREE-DAY CONVENTION. HERRERA SPOKE TO CONVENTION FOLLOWING THE OUTLINE OF COPEI'S DRAFT PLATFORM AND DENOUNCED THE PRESENT GOVT AS CORRUPT, INEFFICIENT, AND WASTEFUL; HE CALLED FOR "PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY" (NOT FURTHER DEFINED), AND FOR THE ROLE OF THE STATE TO BE THAT OF A "PROMOTER", BOTH SLOGANS WHICH WILL FEATURE PROMINENTLY IN THE CAMPAING. RESULTS OF CONVENTION POINT TO A HIGHLY UNIFIED PARTY GOING INTO THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN WITH CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. CALDERA PASSES THE MANTLE. FORMER PRESIDENT CALDERA, INTRODUCING HERRERA TO THE COPEYANO THRONG NOTED THAT THE NEW CANDIDATE IS THE "DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE" FOR VENEZUELA, A MAN OF VISION TO WHOM HE HAS PASSING THE MANTLE OF PARTY LEADERSHIP AND THE IMPLEMENTS OF BATTLE FOR THE UPCOMING CAMPAING.

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2. HERRERA ECHOES THE PARTY PLATFORM. IN HIS ACCEPTANCE SPEECH, HERRERA EMPHASIZED THAT THE NATION "WANTS A GOVT THAT GOVERNS," AND THAT THE POLITICAL PARTY IN POWER HAS SUBSTITUTED ITSELF FOR THE STATE. THE NEXT COPEYANO GOVT WILL REPRESENT ALL VENEZUELAN, WILL GUARANTEE DEMOCRATIC TOLERANCE, DIALOGUE WITH ITS CONSTITUENTS, AVOID

PERSONAL INFLUENCE, AND ADMINISTRATIVE CORRUPTION, AND PROMOTE DIGNITY OF THE PERSON, LIBERTY AND THE RULE OF LAW. THE ROLE OF THE STATE WILL BE THAT OF A PROMOTER, SO THAT ALL CITIZENS PARTICIPATE FULLY. IN ECONOMIC POLICY, HE ATTACKED INFLATION, MALADMINISTRATION OF CREDITS AND SUBSIDIES, AND CALLED FOR THE WORK ETHIC AMONG THE PEOPLE. IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HE STRESSED THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN OPEC, AND TO REDUCE TECHNOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE ("THE LAST VESTIGE OF COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM"). HE CLOSED BY ATTACKING THE PEREZ ADMINISTRATION AS CORRUPT AND INEFFICIENT, AND ONE NOT CAPABLE OF MEETING ITS COMMITMENTS.

3.COMMENT: SINCE HERRERA'S VICTORY WAS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION, THE MOST IMPORTANT RESULT OF THE CONVENTION WAS THE CLOSE IDENTIFICATION OF THE EVER-POPULAR RAFAEL CALDERA WITH HERRERA'S CANDIDACY. CALDERA WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO PRAISE HERRERA AND TO INDICATE PUBLICLY THAT HIS DIFFERENCES WITH HERRERA WHICH EMERGED DURING THE 1973 COPEYANO CAMPAIGN, WHEN HE BLOCKED HERRERA'S EFFORT TO GET THE NOMINATION, HAVE BEEN BURIED. IN ANY CASE, THE PARTY APPARENTLY COMES OUT OF THE CONVENTION HIGHLY UNIFIED.

4. CLEARLY, "PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY" AND THE "PROMOTER STATE" WILL BE CENTRAL THEMES IN THE HERRERA CAMPAIGN. THESE SLOGANS ALLUDE TO A REDUCED (IF NONTHELESS CENTRAL) ROLE OF THE STATE IN THE ECONOMY AND TO GOVT RESPONSIVENESS
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TO THE NEEDS OF THE CITIZENRY, PROBLEMS WHICH THE COPEYANOS HAVE IDENTIFIED DURING THE PEREZ ADMINISTRATION. DESPITE THE IDENTIFICATION OF THESE THEMES, MANY POLITICAL OBSERVERS STILL DO NOT KNOW WHERE LUIS HERRERA STANDS ON THE ISSUE OF STATE INTERVENTION OR WHAT HE WOULD DO TO COMBAT THE PERCEIVED ILLS OF VENEZUELAN SOCIETY. HERRERA'S ELECTION CHANCES, IN PART, COULD WELL DEPEND ON HIS ABILITY NOT ONLY TO CRITICIZE AD'S HANDLING OF THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING VENEZUELA BUT ALSO TO CONVINCE VOTERS THAT HE IS A MAN WHO COULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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